

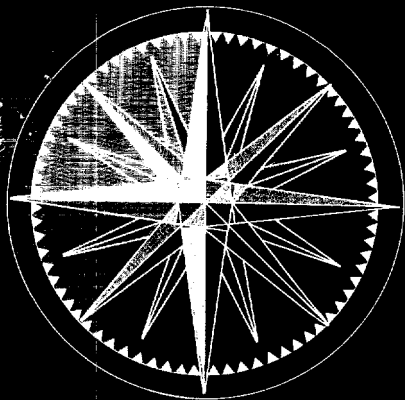
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24 May 1963

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# SPECIAL REPORT

OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION IN FRANCE

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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24 May 1963

## PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION IN FRANCE

Five years after he assumed emergency powers, President Charles de Gaulle, a seemingly robust 72, thoroughly enjoys his position as undisputed head of the French nation. With presidential elections due in 1965, however, speculation is growing in France both as to whether he will seek another seven-year term and on the person of his successor. The many variables bearing on the succession question make it hazardous to predict the next president or the political atmosphere which will follow De Gaulle. There is, nevertheless, increasing reason to expect the transfer of power to be a relatively smooth one.

### Constitutional Provisions

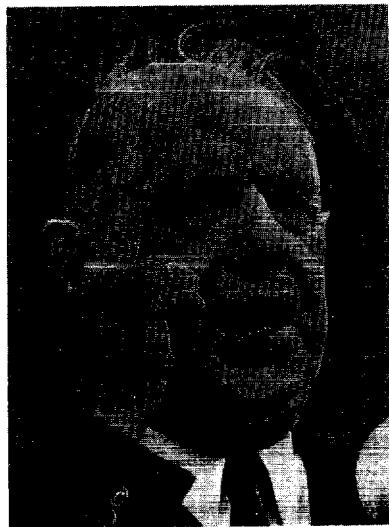
The elimination of the Algerian question and the final acceptance of this fact by the army have removed the most serious obstacles to France's political stability since the end of World War II. The atmosphere of violence and subversion created by the die-hards of the Secret Army Organization has subsided, and only small groups of fanatics are still out to get De Gaulle. Even if he is assassinated, it is very unlikely that it would be part of a well-organized coup to overthrow the regime.

Thus, there is presently little reason to doubt that the constitutional provisions for transitional exercise of presidential power by the president of the Senate--now Gaston Monnerville--would apply. While Monnerville is a bitter critic of De Gaulle and might as interim president under conditions of political turmoil be tempted to use emergency powers to re-

move Gaullists from positions of influence, it is more likely he would adhere strictly to the constitution. This would pave the way for election of a permanent successor within 20 to 35 days.

### Question of a Vice Presidency

In any case, De Gaulle may move in the meantime to eliminate



DE GAULLE

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Monnerville from the emergency line of succession. The question of a constitutional referendum to provide for a vice president was reportedly under advisement over a year ago. De Gaulle, however, seems to have discarded the idea last summer, perhaps because he felt that having a designated successor ready to replace him would reduce the aura of indispensability surrounding his personal leadership.

His petty quarrel with Monnerville over the constitutionality of the fall referendum on the popular election of the president may have caused him to consider again the possibility of establishing a vice-presidential post. It may also have given new impetus to the idea De Gaulle has long toyed with of converting the Senate into an advisory socio-economic body, whose head would no longer be in line for the presidency. A vice presidency could then be established on the same interim basis now in effect for Monnerville, with an election still mandatory to choose a permanent successor.

New Factors Bearing On Succession

Of the several important new factors bearing directly on the presidential succession, the most decisive is the introduction last fall of direct elections by universal suffrage. Even the bitterest opponents of this innovation admit that France is unlikely to revert to a collegial electoral system. One virtue of the new system is that

it discourages a multiplicity of candidates. Like-minded groups are under some pressure to present a common candidate on the first round to be sure their choice is one of the two who compete in the runoff.

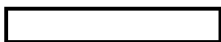
Leaders of the traditional non-Communist parties are already groping for some sort of arrangement whereby they can reach an understanding on a competitor to the Communists as well as the Gaullists in 1965. Although their attempt to block the Gaullists in 1962 quickly disintegrated, they may be more inclined now to take the lesson to heart since their position today is considerably weaker.

An important imponderable, particularly if De Gaulle seeks re-election in 1965 and thereby postpones a real contest, is the relative decreased importance of the rigid political shibboleths of former years. Many of the old issues have lost their meaning, and greater personal mobility is decreasing the influence of local and sometimes narrowly traditional political allegiances and encouraging a broader perspective based on national interests. Young voters have shown themselves to be more absorbed than prewar generations with nonpolitical interests. These factors enhance the desire for political stability, which has been perhaps the sturdiest prop of the Gaullist regime.

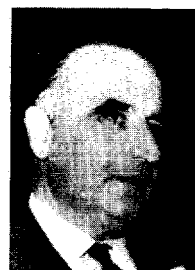
Next to the change in the electoral procedure itself, perhaps the most important

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**AFTER  
DE GAULLE?**



MONNERVILLE



POMPIDOU

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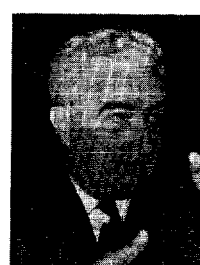
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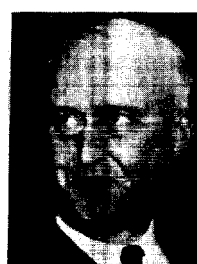
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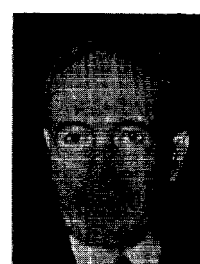
MAURICE FAURE



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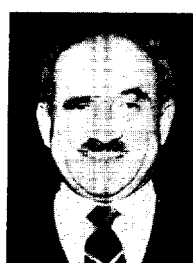
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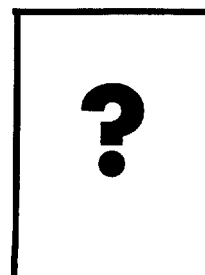
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MONNET



ARMAND



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factor in France's 1962 parliamentary election (as in the 1963 Italian election) was the impact of television. This medium enhances immeasurably the importance of national as against purely local dignitaries. In France, it has been a tremendous advantage to government leaders, who have monopolized the screens. The result has been to push parliamentary figures further into the background.

Ironically, this tendency has put deputies and senators of the Gaullist Union for the New Republic (UNR) at a special disadvantage. While the other parties, deprived of TV, can fall back on the newspapers, most of the press is anti-Gaullist and avoids giving publicity to the UNR if it possibly can avoid it.

**Likely Successors**

There is probably too much emphasis in public discussions of French presidential prospects on the dearth of potential successors of De Gaulle's caliber. While the exceptional competence France has developed in many fields has not always been apparent in the political sphere, the old constitutional framework may have posed a disproportionately large deterrent to the candidacy of top-notch contenders. With the powers now available to a French president, De Gaulle's successor ought to be able to assert his leadership and make it stick.

This is particularly true since the introduction of direct popular elections, which considerably reduce the chances that a nonentity would accede to the presidency as a compromise candidate. Moreover, the weakening of the political parties which is a paramount feature of the Fifth Republic can only mean less organized political influence on the decisions of the president, regardless of his political outlook.

Among prospective Gaullist contenders, the name of Premier Georges Pompidou comes first to mind. He became a familiar figure to French households during the March mine strikes. He has made an impression as a national leader of greater stature perhaps than traditional spokesmen of the Fourth Republic now hold. In the event of a premature departure of De Gaulle, Gaullist support would probably coalesce around Pompidou.

Ex-premier Michel Debré's return to the National Assembly via a by-election has improved his political chances somewhat, but he will not be in the public eye to the same degree as Pompidou. Moreover, he has many enemies among elements still capable of exerting some political power, and they would probably look less favorably on him than on others identified with the regime, such as National Assembly President Jacques Chaban-Delmas, Finance Minister Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Minister of State Louis Joxe, Education Minister

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Christian Fouchet, or even Information Minister Alain Peyrefitte.

Outside Gaullist ranks, Guy Mollet, Edgar and Maurice Faure (no relation), Rene Pleven, and perhaps Pierre Pflimlin and Antoine Pinay are still too closely identified with the Fourth Republic in the public mind of give any one of them a clear advantage. Pierre Mendes-France seems to have lost much of the enthusiasm he was able to generate among the politically conscious youth of the mid-1950s.

A nonpolitical candidate such as Jean Monnet or Louis Armand, a top-notch public administrator and corporation head, cannot be ruled out.

Political Outlook

The key question is really less one of the personality of the immediate successor than of the political climate in which he will operate.

Whether the UNR has three or ten years to establish itself may be the decisive factor. There is no guarantee, of course, that the UNR can retain its identity in the post-Gaullist era.

There are, at the present time, more pressures than be-

fore which can be expected to militate against political fragmentation. All the parties can be expected to tailor their programs increasingly toward a broad national appeal, thus disguising factional differences. The European integration movement will probably accentuate this trend, and united action to back a presidential candidate will inevitably have some long-range impact toward reducing the number of separate parties participating in parliamentary elections.

Efforts to strip the presidency of its broad powers are inevitable. There is, nevertheless, wide acceptance, except by the far left, of the idea that an all-powerful assembly is no more desirable than an all-powerful executive. There is also more open recognition that a Sixth Republic under a new constitution would offer no real assurance of meaningful political reform. The strongest argument against a broad constitutional revision is probably the basic reluctance to disturb the political structure except in times of great turmoil. This does not rule out efforts to establish a greater degree of equilibrium between the executive and the legislature, but it does bolster a presidential as against a legislative regime.

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